

Snowmobile Advisory Council Meeting
November 9, 2012
IF&W Office Bangor – 9 AM to 12 PM

In attendance:

Advisory Committee Members

Marie Candeloro – Kokadjo Roach Riders
Bob Hansen – MSA Trails
Rick LeVasseur – Jo Mary Riders
Scott Clements – Newburgh Country Side Riders
Gordon Gamble – Wagner Forest Management
Paul Napolitano – Ragged Riders
Richard Merrill – Snow Valley Sno-Goers

Not Present

Ken Ingalls
Jim Yearwood
Terry Hill

Division of Parks and Public Lands

Will Harris – Director, Bureau of Parks and Public Lands
Scott Ramsay – Director, Off Road Vehicle Unit
Lana LaPlant-Ellis, Planner, Off Road Vehicle Unit
Joe Higgins – Snowmobile Program, Off Road Vehicle Unit

Participants

Maurice Marden – MSA Trail Committee
Therese Lussier
David Stevens – MSA VP Northern Region
Jim White – MSA President
Bob Meyers – MSA Executive Director
Larry Lafland – MSA Trail Committee
Joe Albuit – Solon Snow Hawks
Stephen Paskoski – Solon Snow Hawks

Will Harris started the meeting by welcoming and thanking the committee members and interested parties for attending. Introductions were made around the room. Will identified that with the recent elections there are new faces and new assignments that we will be dealing with.

Scott Ramsay handed out information on NH registrations. He also spoke to the recent survey sent out to snowmobile clubs requesting information on revenue shortfalls. There were only two clubs that indicated they had outstanding bills from last year. No specific figures were provided and without additional financial information it would be impossible to determine reimbursement, if any. After conversation about obtaining financial information and how to determine which clubs will get more money it was decided that we should move forward and not revisit the past.

Election of Officers:

- ❖ **Chair:** Scott Clement nominated Rick Levassuer and Gordon Gamble seconded. Marie Candeloro nominated Jim Yearwood and Paul Napolitano seconded. By a show of hands the committee voted 5 for Rick Levassuer and 2 for Jim Yearwood.
- ❖ **Vice Chair:** Gordon Gamble nominated Jim Yearwood and Marie Candeloro seconded. By a show of hands the committee unanimously voted Jim Yearwood as Vice Chair.

Topics of discussion:

- Bob Hansen passed out two handouts – “Snowmobile Trail Funding” and “Revenue Possibilities”. The handouts outlined where increases could be made in order to reach 70% and 100% reimbursement. A total increase of \$29.00+ would be needed to realize 100% funding for club, municipal, and capital equipment grants. Will Harris questioned Bob on the fact that only resident registration increases were indicated on the handouts and asked if residents would carry all the weight? Bob indicated this was the case. Will noted that non-resident registration would need to be taken into account for the Legislature to even consider a registration fee increase. Bob indicated that this was strictly a proposal to balance the budget and that he was just getting some figures out for consideration. As in past council meetings, it was discussed that the actual figures to maintain trail are much higher than represented in the grant figures. Many indicated they are putting a lot more money into the trail system than they are getting back. Scott indicated that 100% funding may be unobtainable.
- A united front must be in place in order to address the funding issue at the Legislative level. There should be no more mention of “business clubs” and “local clubs”. We need answers, we need a champion, and we need MSA to be behind this committee. MSA indicated the committee would have their support, however, this would have to go in front of the board. It was also mentioned that the “snow belt” has little representation at the legislative level and therefore a significant amount of educating will be required. Support will need to be garnered from the Maine Tourism Association, Maine Restaurant Association, Maine Inn Keepers Association, Ski Maine, etc.
- There is also extreme diversity in the trail systems from Northern Maine where there is an extensive trail system to Southern Maine where the trail system is smaller. In general the north gets more snow than the south. A discussion ensued about how to equitably distribute funds across the state. Should this be determined by snow levels, trail usage, or the duration of the winter? It would be difficult to fund trails based on location.
- It was expressed that “The big winner here is the State of Maine”. This is the only industry in Maine that runs on the back of volunteers and business owners.

- State groomed trails were discussed. Could this possibly be an area of savings? These trails include: ITS80 White Mountains, ITS81 Beddington, and ITS89 Mount Blue. The discussion involved the critical nature of these trails and the fact that there is no one else in the area available to maintain these sections of trail. Fragmentation of the trail system is a serious concern.
- A moratorium on new trails was discussed. Could we simply not approve any new trails? Is 14,000 miles adequate? If the clubs want to add trail, they would have to do that at their own expense. The question about rerouting trails around logging operations, etc. was mentioned. Possibly language could include a stipulation that the Director could add miles at his discretion.
- New clubs. It was suggested that since we cannot meet 100% funding for existing clubs then we should have a moratorium on new clubs. It was questioned whether or not this would be legal. This year 2 new clubs were legally formed and 3 folded, therefore we are losing clubs faster than we are adding them.
- We must be concerned about fragmentation of the trail system. The business based clubs will be looking at whether or not the return on investment is worth it. The volunteer clubs are looking at not having enough revenue to maintain trails. If landowners pull out, because trails are not maintained, what will that do to the snowmobile tourism industry?
- The last economic study was done in 1998 we really need another study completed. It was indicated that it would cost approximately \$60,000 and would take a full year to complete.

Other Topics Discussed:

- Mandatory club membership
- Trail Pass
- Educate Non-snowmobilers
- No more Capital Equipment Grants
- Advertising
- Online advertising – IF&W web site, pop up upon registration– where does your \$ go? Yes, I'd like to join MSA, other screens?
- Trail moratorium. No new trails will be added, with a stipulation that the Director could add miles at his discretion.
- Fund 70% club grant and 90% municipal grant.
- Do away with capital equipment grants, if grooming rates are adjusted to more realistic numbers.
- Establish an early registration fee and a late registration fee.

Legislation would need to be introduced for some of these changes. Need a title in by cloture date.

Next meeting in Sidney the first or second week in December 6th, 7th, 13th or 14th. Scott Ramsay will nail down and send out notification of the date and time.

Meeting adjourned at 12:15 PM.

Post Note: In an email to the Committee from Jim Yearwood dated November 13, 2012 he indicated “I will respectfully decline the Vice Chair”. The Vice Chair position will need to be revisited at the next meeting.